The Chant on Protecting and Transforming

By Thich Nhat Hanh

Dear Sangha,

Today is the 12th of March 1998 and we are in the New Hamlet. We are continuing the winter retreat in the spring retreat, and we are going to study The Chant on Protecting and Transforming. We need to have a new second body in the spring retreat. We should use our experience from the winter retreat in having a second body and take a step further in this practice so we can do it more deeply. We must master this practice, as the Dharma door of the second body is going to be a very important Dharma door, and we're going to share it with different Sanghas in other parts of the world. At the end of this retreat we will write a report about what we have learnt about our practice of the second body. We have to report on how we have been able to help our second body, and we also have to talk about our feelings about the benefits that have come to us from this practice and the difficulties we have been able to overcome, or avoid, thanks to this practice. It's a wonderful Dharma door and we need to succeed in its practice and therefore we should not practice according to the outer form, just saying I have a second body. If we do it only half-heartedly we will have nothing to report. Actually, we are not practicing in order to report, but we are practicing in order to have a deep experience, a direct experience of the benefits of the practice.

Secondly, we should learn more about how to hold meetings in the Sangha. We are still very bad at this - we have meetings that are too long and make people very tired. There are moments in the meetings that are stressful and tense; there is irritation and we lose the faith of people who are with us when we do that. Therefore, the Sangha must organize Dharma discussions in order to find out how meetings in the Sangha can be beneficial, can be a real practice with peace, joy, smiles and happiness, and without tension or lasting too long. Everybody should contribute to these Dharma discussions so that the quality of the meetings in the Sangha can be raised. How can we do that so that in these meetings there are no unkind or unbeneficial words spoken which pass back and forth between people. We need to have somebody who is able to bring the Sangha back to the real matter of the meeting, and whenever there is tension that person should know how to remove the tension otherwise it is harmful for our minds.

I remember in the past there was a gathering, before we had the Unified Buddhist Church we had the Vietnamese Congregation and in charge of that was a high monk. It was a very long meeting with the Congregation. He was the facilitator sitting at the bell from hour to hour with great dignity and he was listening to what everyone was saying, what every monk from the South, from the Center and from the North of Vietnam was saying. When the country of Vietnam was divided, then the monks made different congregations: in the South, in the Center and in the North. In addition there were also sections for the monks and those for the lay people. This meeting was very long and there were moments in the meeting when there was great tension, if you compare, you could say that they are not very different from meetings of Parliamentarians in the world - there was a lot of tension. I was, at that time, the editor of a certain Buddhist magazine, therefore I had to be there. I saw there was a lot of tension and the monk behind the bell

did not intervene - he just sat there. He just had to say perhaps one word and the tension would go down straight away, or one sentence and the tension would go straight away because his virtue and dignity was very great.

When I was in India, I met the Premier of India and I gave him a couple of suggestions to be used in the National Assembly, because I heard people were fighting in the Assembly. I suggested a couple of things that the leader of the national assembly liked very much. The next day he established a committee to look into the ethics of the national assembly. One of the suggestions, which I gave, was that when they begin a meeting of the National Assembly, the Chairman should say, "*I have been asked to represent the assembly in asking you to be able to listen to each other so that our collective wisdom can bring about beneficial decisions. Therefore in today's meeting I ask you to practice deep listening and loving speech."* The members of the assembly all belong to different spiritual traditions, but these words of advice can be accepted by any spiritual traditions. Whenever there is tension the Chairman can invite the bell for everybody to breathe, and when somebody stands up to express themselves in an unkind voice, then he can also invite the bell. The leader of the National Assembly liked that very much and said he would use this. So why don't we also use these suggestions in our own meetings, because in our meetings there is also tension. When the elder brothers and sisters have tension between them, the younger brothers and sisters feel very weary of this - they think the older brothers and sisters have practiced a long time but they still have tension between them.

At the beginning of the meeting, we have three sounds of the bell, and then we read something like this:

Before the Buddha, before the ancestral teachers, we vow that today's meetings will take place in the spirit of harmony of views and harmony of thought. We will use loving speech and deep listening so that today's meeting will bring about beautiful results.

These results are an offering we can give to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We vow not to hold back in sharing our wisdom, but we also vow not to speak if we see that in us there is irritation. We are determined not to allow stress and tension to arise in the meeting, and if there is tension, we vow immediately to stop the meeting, to stand up and practice repentance in order to return the atmosphere of harmony of thought to the Sangha. Repeat these words*:*

Lord Buddha, and teachers over many generations; we vow to go through this meeting today in the spirit of happy sharing. We will use loving speech and deep listening in order to bring about the success of the meeting as an offering to the Three Jewels. We vow not to hesitate to share our insight honestly, but will not say anything if the feeling of irritation and anger is present in us. We will not let tension come up during the meeting, and at the sign of such tension we will stop right away and begin anew so that it will be completely gone before we resume our meeting.

We read this first and if necessary we read it a second time. At the time of the meeting we need somebody sitting at the bell - a bell-master, mindfulness master. During the meetings that person is asked by the community to have that responsibility, and they are supposed to stop the tension arising in the meeting. If tension does arise that person is responsible for dissolving it, for letting off the steam of the tension. Whenever there is tension that person should see it and should admit – yes, there is tension - breathing in, I know there is tension, breathing out I know there is tension. I know what I have to do to stop the tension because this is for the happiness of the Sangha. The result of a meeting is something we offer to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and if all we have to offer is tension, what a pity for the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. If someone in the meeting feels there is tension, that person can stand up and say respectfully to the chairman of the meeting, *I feel there is tension in this meeting. A*nybody can do that; a novice who feels there is tension can stand up, join their palms and the mindfulness master has the duty to do something about that tension. If someone feels they have said something that has made tension, they should stand up straight away, prostrate and say:

I prostrate to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. I have brought about tension, I am very sorry.

And that will bring about harmony of thinking. Sometimes it is somebody who is not responsible for the tension, they can invite that other person to prostrate with them. The third method we could use - we can put a cushion for Thây in the meeting. Although Thây isn't there, we see that Thây is there and whenever we say something to the Sangha we always say "*respected teacher, respected Sangha*" - we talk as if Thây is there because Thây is in fact in every one of us. When we say "*respected Thây*" like that and we are aware that Thây is sitting with us and he is expecting us to speak in mindfulness, with loving speech and listen with mindfulness, then whatever we say will be with harmony of thought. This practice exists in our tradition already. In the Root Temple, my teacher used to sit at a table and

whenever one of the disciples went past that table he would bow his head, whether our teacher was there or not. If he wasn't there we still bowed our head. Bowing our head like that was beneficial for us. It wasn't really beneficial for our teacher - he didn't need that, but we needed it. The guesthouse was a place where our teacher always used to sit. Nobody else wanted to sit there because that would be impolite, and when we went past that place we would bow our head and when two of us went past we always felt that our teacher was there, so what we said in that place was always mindful. So, in our meeting we can put a cushion for Thây as if Thây is there and when we come into the meeting we join our palms and bow our head towards that cushion and when we say something in the meeting we always say "*respected teacher, respected Sangha"*. Later we will be able to do it without the outer sign, but to begin with we need the outer sign. This is a method we can use to raise the quality of our meetings in the Sangha.

As far as Shining Light is concerned, we have to shine the light on those who are preparing to become Dharmacharyas, and we also need to shine light on those who have already become Dharmacharyas. First of all, those practicing to become Dharmacharyas and then those who are already Dharmacharyas. The Shining Light method is very wonderful. It is a Dharma door which we offer to the Three Jewels and which we will hand on to future generations, so therefore we have to be successful. We have to do what we can; we have to shine the light with all our compassion and loving-kindness, with all our respect. We have to say everything we have seen about the person we are shining light on, with respect, with compassion, with love. We should see the person we are shining light on as ourselves. We haven't the right to hide what we have seen; we have to be sincere in saying what we have seen. This is not a matter of not sharing respect, but is a method of deep looking. We may need to take time from sitting meditation in order to look deeply, because sitting meditation and looking deeply are the same, and in a session of looking deeply we need the same seriousness as we have in meditation. We should sit, body and mind as one, our backs straight, not sitting in a sloppy way and we should shine light, sitting as straight as we do in sitting meditation and with all our heart. There are a number of lay people who need to have light shone on them because they are practicing to be Dharmacharyas. All those practicing to become Dharmacharyas have to begin, so that they can show us in the Summer Retreat that they are practicing to be Dharmacharyas. They really have to practice to show their capacities in the summer. There is an Order Of Inter-being member in the upper hamlet who has made a lot of transformation, and I would like that person, he is '*True Great Instrument'*, to be practicing to be a Dharmacharya. I want him to be able to help people who come in the summer. When he first came to Plum Village he was not a good practitioner but while he's been here he's made a lot of progress; he's helped his family and he has said quite correctly that not necessarily every body in the Sangha loves him, but nobody hates him. I think it is true, everybody sees that, and he is very worthy to be a Dharmacharya, so therefore I suggest that he should begin practicing to learn to be a Dharmacharya. If monks and nuns can do as well as he does, then they are already doing very well.

We should practice our dharma doors with all our heart and straightaway. One day, I mentioned in a Dharma Talk the ways in which we can practice in the kitchen. It is a practice when it’s our turn to cook for the Sangha. I suggested that when we go into the kitchen to practice in the morning, we should begin our time of working by lighting a stick of incense together. We should invite the bell before we bring out the carrots and the potatoes. I was very happy to hear that the day after I mentioned that point, two sisters did this straight away. Our Dharma doors are being practiced seriously in the New Hamlet, Lower Hamlet and Upper Hamlet.

With regards to the practice of the second body - we may have a second body who we feel is difficult to look after, because people who we think would be easy to look after have already been taken. The method of getting a second body is this - everybody says the name of the person they want to be their second body and at first there are many people to choose from, but as we go along there is only one person left, and we have to choose that person. We may feel that this person is very difficult to look after, but you should know that this is a wonderful chance for you, an opportunity. The person that you think would be difficult can bring us a great deal of benefit and joy in our practice. There are fruits that have thorns and are hard, but when we break them open, they taste very good. The monkeys know that - they break these hard-skinned fruits. There are people we see, who, from the outside are not very sweet. The way they talk is rather severe, but if we know how to deal with them, if we are able to open them up, then the fruit is very sweet - you must have seen people like this. Myself, I have seen there are people who are shy, withdrawing; they don't say anything, speak anything, but one day they react very strongly - that is because for a long time they wanted to say something but they haven't dared to say it. So we think that person may be very unkind and not at all gentle, but in fact, we can help that person become a very sweet spring of water, so don't be deceived by the outside - don't think that the second body is very difficult to look after. Bring all your ability to look after that person and that person will

become a very sweet spring of water. Good luck.

So, protecting and transforming our practice is to guard the six organs of sense – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind - they are like six gates to a city. Do not allow the bandits to come into the city through those gates. The guards who stand at the gates of the city are mindfulness, because when we have mindfulness we are able to recognize what is coming in and going out. There are times we allow people in the gates, but if they are strangers then we should know what they are bringing in because they could invade our city. And we have released our city to them, so therefore we have to see the coming in and going out of the sounds and the images of the different mental formations. The practitioner who does not know how to guard the six senses, how can they practice and transform these things? There are things that are not as we would like them to be in our body and our mind - suffering, craving, anger, hatred and ignorance. We have to be able to transform these things into something more positive, so that is why we have this chant called "Protecting and Transforming"; we chant it to direct us in our practice. *"We your disciples who, from the beginning-less time, have made ourselves unhappy out of confusion and ignorance*". This chant was written by me when I was 24 or 25 years old and after that the congregation of Vietnam put it in their daily liturgy and I changed it a little bit and made it into the chant we have here.

"*We your disciples who from beginning-less time*" means for so long - in fact, from time without beginning. In English we say non-beginning. It is to help us see about how Buddhism looks at time, because time does not have a beginning - there isn't a point zero in time, which afterwards has minute one, minute two, minute three. Time has no beginning because in the teachings of the Buddha, time is a manifestation. It is a phenomenon and every phenomenon depends on other phenomena in order to arise and manifest. If there is not space, there is not time. If there is not material, there is not time. The Buddha talks about the six elements – earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness, and in these six elements there is time, even though it's not mentioned as one of them it lies within them. The eight elements are earth, water, fire, air, space, time, consciousness, direction, and consciousness. For these eight elements, each one contains to the other seven - if you look into one, you will see the other seven. Matter is one of manifestation; therefore time is not a separate existing identity. This is true of the relativity theory of Albert Einstein-time and space are not two things, they are part of the same reality. They cannot be divided from each other – this is, because that is – so time and space are just ideas we have and they manifest and we see them and when we look into time, we see space. We say summer is time and space also. Now we are in winter, but if we go to Australia, where some monks and nuns are soon going, we will see that it is summer over there, so a season is time, but also space. Beginning-less time means we don't know when it began. It could be now; it could have been far away in the past, so this is the first time the beginning of time has been talked about in terms of interdependent arising.

We, your disciples, who from beginning-less time have made ourselves unhappy out of confusion and ignorance. The word "disciple" in Chinese means younger brother and child, so we are both the younger brother and sister and the child of the Buddha, so we have done things because of our speech, our body and our mind. These things have made obstacles in our life and we have done these things because we are ignorant, we don't know where we are going. We have made many mistakes that make us suffer and those around us suffer. We don't want to do these things, but because we are ignorant and confused we do them. We have wrong perceptions and that is why we do these things. *So we have been born and died with no direction so many times and now we have found confidence in the highest awakening.* Before the throne of the Buddha, and this awakened person is sitting on the throne and they have the highest awakening - they could not find a higher awakening, so we come before this person in order to begin anew. *We have seen clearly that there is a beautiful path.* "Path" here means the pure teachings - the way, the light. With the great good fortune we are drifting on the ocean and we see the lighthouse, and we know that we have returned. For so many lifetimes we have been in confusion and ignorance, but now we see the light of the Buddha dharma and we have an opportunity. *Therefore, we turn in the direction of the light of loving-kindness*, because love is a light that brings us out of suffering. *We bow deeply to the Buddha and our spiritual ancestors.* The Buddha is one of our spiritual ancestors who has established the path of awakening, and Buddha Shakyamuni said that before him there were other Buddhas. Therefore Shakyamuni also had spiritual ancestors, such as Buddha Kasyapa, Buddha Vipashyn and Buddha Sikhin; therefore, "Buddha and ancestral teachers" mean that Buddha and ancestral teachers throughout all generations are one, so we bow down to them all. Buddha is a spiritual teacher and the spiritual teachers and ancestors are the continuation of Buddha who can light the path and guide our steps. We bow deeply to the light which we use to shine on our path and guide our steps. Buddha and teachers are one. *The wrongdoing and suffering which has imprisoned us has resulted from great hatred, ignorance and pride. Today, we sincerely begin anew to purify and free our hearts of*

the wrongdoing which we have done in our lives; the harmfulness, not only harming in the sense of killing, but words which are negative. Anything which is not conducive to love and awakening is what is referred to here as just not cruelty - it's the opposite of purified action, and it also means that our body and our mind has become black and dark, without happiness. All these sufferings and wrongdoings come from greed, craving and attachment because of hatred, because of ignorance, because of pride. *Today we sincerely begin anew to purify and free our hearts.* So we resolve to become anew before the Buddha. I am determined to put and end to my old livelihood and begin a new way of life, taking the 5 precepts or the 10 precepts or the 250 precepts. I want to start a new way of live and put an end to my old way of life - that is the meaning of beginning anew.

There are seven kinds of pride-called the Seven Prides. The first kind of pride is when we say that we are better than others; we feel that we are better than others. It is also pride to say we are just as good as others and to say that you are worse than others, so we can have pride towards those who are not as good as us, or equal to us, or we say that we are better than them. When people are the same as us, and we say we are better, then we can see that we shouldn't do that. Why can't we say that we are better than people who are not as good as us? According to Buddha, people who are not as good as us have Buddha nature just the same as we do; they have the awakening nature just the same as us. Just because the conditions and causes have not been sufficient enough for them to be able to develop that awakened nature, we are not better than they are. In fact, if they had had the right causes and conditions they might well do better than us. We always think that the other person could never be as good as us, so pride is not only to think we are better than those who are equal to us, but it is also to think that we are better than those who are not as good as us.

The second kind of pride is when someone is equal to us and we say that we are better than them, and when someone is better than us, we say we are equal. You're not any better than me; you're just the same. The third kind of pride is when the other person is better than we are and we say that we are better than them. It is not enough to say that we are equal to someone who is better than we are, but when we say we are better than somebody who is better than us - that is going too far. The fourth pride is self-pride, pride of self. That is the basic pride, the root of all pride. We see that the five aggregates are us - the five aggregates are self, or they belong to the self. They are me or they are mine. In our everyday language we say we are very proud - in Vietnamese we say we are very proud of ourselves - but that doesn't really mean what it means here. We are not awakened, yet we say we have realized. This is one of the very important precepts of a monk or nun, very severe. Even though someone has not made realizations in the practice they say that they have made realizations in the practice, or they do things to make people think they have realizations in the practice, and they offend against the precept. All these are superiority complexes.

Then there is the complex of being worse than others - thinking we're not worth anything, an inferiority complex. In the novice precepts there is a sentence describing this in Chinese - *if the other is a hero then we can be a hero; we should not despise ourselves*... And finally there is wrong pride, which means we do not have virtues, but we make out that we have virtues. We call our self, "The Venerable One". We do not have compassion and love, but we make out we have compassion and love. We don't have insight, but we make out we have insight. These are of the seven different manifestations; forms according to the Abidharma Koshasastra of Vasubandhu. There are also theories of three prides... the ten prides, etc. Our substance is this equal nature, the Samathajnana, the sameness, the equal-ness nature - to be able to see the sameness and the equal-ness of all species with ourselves.

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The wrong actions that have imprisoned us have resulted in greed, hatred, ignorance and pride. Today, we sincerely begin anew in order to purify and free our hearts. These words want me to proclaim that I do not want to continue the life of suffering which I have had in the past. I want to develop a new life so that is why I am beginning anew. When I have begun anew, I will have a new energy and I will feel light in my heart and my body, so today we sincerely begin anew. *Awakened wisdom bright like the sun and moon - immeasurable compassion, merciful and kind.* These are two sentences to praise the Buddha - on the one hand there is compassion and on the other hand there is wisdom. The wisdom of the Buddha is like the sun and moon and the love of the Buddha can rescue very many sentient beings. *We resolve to live well throughout our life, going for refuge to the Three Jewels.* We look up at the Buddha and see that the Buddha is the example for us to follow - an example of compassion and wisdom. And we want to follow the Buddha, we want to be as Buddha, we want to go on the path of Buddha; we are resolved to live well throughout our life, going for refuge to the Three Jewels. That is, we take whole life and go for refuge with our whole life, all the

way, with everything we have. We bring all our life and we invest it in the Three Jewels. *We shall take the boat of loving kindness to go over the ocean of sufferings.* This is not a matter of belief; this is a matter of action. There is a boat and you get onto the boat - the boat of loving-kindness. It is only that boat that can help me to go over the ocean of suffering and reach the other shore. That is the boat of wisdom, so this is action - it is not a wish, a desire.

So we shall use the torch of understanding to come out of the forest of confusion, the forest of wrong perceptions. *With determination we shall realize learning, reflecting and practice.* Learning, reflecting and practice are the progress of the practice. You hear the teachings - you look deeply into want you are listening to - you shine light on what you hear and what you hear shines light on your own thought and on the environment you're living in. You see how you have suffered and how you have lived and you are determined to get out of that situation by learning, reflecting, and practicing - that is, applying what we have looked deeply into. We have heard, and we have used what we have heard, to look deeply and then we practice. After that, we apply it in our daily lives. With determination we shall realize learning, reflecting and practice. Every day we do this - we learn and we bring what we have learnt to into our daily life.

Right view shall be the basis of actions of body, speech and mind. Right view means there are many ways to define the meaning of right view. First of all, it is the insight, which depends on the principle of the Four Noble Truths. This is the principle of the Four Noble Truths - to practice learning, reflecting and practicing. The first of the Four Noble Truths is that we have to recognize our suffering - the suffering, which I am bearing, and the suffering, which those around me are bearing. We have to accept that this suffering is real and be sure not to say, "0h, I'm not suffering-why should I be suffering?" We have this kind of suffering which we have to admit – I am suffering, I am suspecting, I am unkind, I am angry, I am blaming, I am craving, I am attached. I have these sufferings and I accept them. And after that, I look deeply to see the causes of my suffering. Why am I suffering these particular thoughts? And that is the look of those who practice according to the Second Noble Truth - the making of suffering. Then we can see the reasons that have brought about our suffering, and we are determined to put an end to it because these sufferings can end. So, the third Noble Truth is the way to transform and end our suffering, and this is called the path of reflecting. In learning reflecting and practicing we have to go on this path and when we practice the Four Noble Truths we have to be able to see the Four Noble Truths not as a matter of knowledge, knowledge is not right view. Right view is to learn about these sufferings and to be able to get insight into them, to recognize them in us, to know why we have them, and to see that there is a method, a way, a path to transform them. Learning, reflecting and practicing has to go according to the Four Noble Truths. It has to be applied in terms of the Four Noble Truths, and in the light of the Four Noble Truths we can learn, reflect, and practice.

Shariputra said that right view could be defined in the light of the four kinds of nourishment or edible food. The Buddha taught that there is nothing, which can exist without being nourished. Our happiness needs to be nourished if it is to continue, and our suffering has to be nourished in order for it to continue. There is nothing that can continue to live without nourishment and therefore we have to look with the eyes of the four nourishments. First of all, the nourishment we bring in through our mouth - these foods can bring about suffering or happiness for us. We have to look into them to see clearly the basis of food. Looking into the food, edible food, we see the substance of these things and we know whether we should eat them or not. That is right view, and in learning, reflecting and practicing we have to do this. Second is the food of sense impression, that is the matter which we bring into us through the six organs of the senses - the eyes, ears, nose, body, mouth and tongue - the smells which we are attracted to, the stories, the novels, the songs and the films which we look at. They all belong to the second kind of food called sense impression food.

The first is edible food the second is sense impressions. When we are driving through Bordeaux, we see the advertising boards and sometimes we hear a love song and all these things are food - called the food of sense impression, and if this food is poisonous we should be able to see that. That is right view. We are singing an emotional song, we're listening to an emotional song, then we are eating sense impression food. We eat the sentimental song and then when we're sitting it'll come back to us again, so when we are in the monastery, if we don't look at films, we don't read books of the world, we are protected to a large extent. Because those images will go into us and darken our souls, they agitate and disturb our whole mind. These are the kind of poisons which those in the world consume every day and they have to learn how to transform this. If we are depressed, it may be because we have not looked after our sense impression food. We have seen or heard things, which make us anxious and despairing. All these things can come from the food of sense impression. When we come into the monastery, practice the 10 precepts, the 5 precepts,

the 14 precepts, we protect ourselves. We do not consume intoxicating sense impression food and learning, affecting our practice, which is illuminated by right view. If we leave the practice center and go to Bordeaux for 24 hours, we will begin to consume the sense impression food of the world, it is enough time for us to be intoxicated. What if we are in the world for our whole life? Sense impression food is a very important kind of food. We need right view to be able to see what kind of food will bring us back our peace, joy and stability and what kind of food will bring back destruction.

The third kind of food is called intention. The food of intention is our wishes and our desires for the future. Someone's life is directed by their intentions. We want to become a nun or a monk. The reason why we become a monk or a nun is because in us there is an energy that motivates us pushes us. We want to become a monk or nun; we want a simple life; we want to transform our suffering. We want to train ourselves in the capacity to help the world, and that energy is what pushes us to become a monk or nun - that is the food of intention. But there are also intentions, which don't take us in a good direction like that - they could take us in the direction of sadness. A person may think that they have to kill the person that has made them suffer in order for them to be happy. The other person has done so many injustices to him and if he cannot kill the other, he does not feel satisfied, and so the only reason he stays alive is to get revenge. His life only has one motivation - that is to take revenge on the other person. Or we want a certain position like a manager or director - we say that if I cannot be director, there is no point in my being alive, so all body, speech and mind actions, all strength of mind, is used in order to have that post. We see a great energy in that person, but we know when that person does become director he will have to suffer. So our motivation could be our hatred or our anger. Mindfulness will show us where this food of intention is leading us because we are being driven away on the path of suffering. If that energy is the energy, which pushes us on towards the direction of enlightenment and freedom, of saving others, then that action has a very wholesome intention and we should be very happy to have that kind of intention. But if our intention belongs to the realm of craving, hatred or revenge we should see that, and we should not allow this source of food to destroy us. We need right view to be able to see that. If we don't see that then we don't have right view.

Finally, there is the food of consciousness. Our consciousness every day eats a great deal, and we become what we eat as far as consciousness is concerned. We are what we eat and we eat all kinds of things. We have edible food as well as sense impression food, attention food, and consciousness food. Master Tang Hoi said that our consciousness is like a great Ocean - it receives the water from the rivers from all directions – the Ganga, the Mekong, the Red River, the Mississippi River – we receive all these sources of wholesome things and unwholesome things. If we received too many negative things we will use them to do negative things, so we should see that our consciousness is like a great Ocean, receiving the waters of all rivers. We have to be aware that our consciousness is six sense objects and if we don't have mindfulness and practice guarding these six sense objects then our consciousness will be poisoned. The fifth mindfulness training talks about this, so when we talk about right view, first of all we talk about right feeling being the insight which flows on from the Four Noble Truths, and right view is the insight which follows on from the four kinds of nourishment. I'm determined to practice learning, reflecting and practicing; these are the basis of our practice.

Right mindfulness will determine our walking, standing and sitting. When there is mindfulness, there is benefit. When there is no benefits, it is because there is no Mindfulness. This is the training of the monk or nun and also the layperson because our practice is the practice of right mindfulness and when there is right mindfulness of walking, standing, lying down, and sitting, it will be different, more beautiful. So if we live deeply every moment of our life, right Mindfulness will determine the form of our speaking, smiling, coming in and going out. *Whenever anger and anxiety enter our heart we are determined to come back to ourselves with conscious breathing.* This is like a treaty we sign whenever we are angry or anxious. We do not allow these things to pull us away; we are determined to practice; we return to our breathing. If not, we are not a monk or a nun, we are not a lay practitioner who practices mindfulness.

Every step enters the Pure Land every look sees the Dharmakaya. If we practice already then each step of ours will nourish us. If not, we are walking in the Saha world, or in the hell realms - and that is a great pity for us because we practice for mother, or father, for grandparents, for spiritual ancestors, and for future generations. We have to be able to walk on the Pure Land. That is the only way to practice. If we have mindfulness, if we can dwell in the present moment, we are in touch with the wonderful things of life and the Pure Land is present right here and now. If we continue to walk in the Saha world, we let down our family and we betray our body and our mind, so why are our steps based in the world of dust? Why can we not step in the Pure Land where every look is able to see the

Dharmakaya? You have to look deeply. If you look superficially you will not see the Dharmakaya. Look at a pebble, a flower, a glass of water. Look at a brother or a sister deeply. To see deeply into our nature our education needs to be changed. When we send our children to the middle school, the high school, or the University, they learn a lot but when they are 20 or 25 years old their capacity to be able to see themselves and to see those around them is very weak. In society and life they still do not know themselves and they do not know those around them because the level of their mindfulness is so weak. What does it means to see oneself? It means that when we are angry or sad, we know that we are angry and sad. When we walk, we know we walk and when we sit, we know we sit. That capacity in them is so very weak. So educators, who have studied so much, when they are 25 years old they still don't know themselves and the people around them. Therefore, we have to change our education.

Who is an educator? Who are those concerned about the future of education? There are adults who are 22 years old and do not know what is happening within themselves, do not know who they are - these people go around in the world not knowing what is happening to them. It means that their level of mindfulness is very low and when we don't know who we are and what is happening to us, how can we see those around us deeply to see that they are also suffering? They are also caught. How can we look at them with the eyes of loving kindness and compassion? How can we understand them?

To know ourselves, to have self-awareness - we know our body is there, we know our mental formations are there. We learnt these things in the Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. Here is this body, here is this mental formation; this body is in such a state; this mental formation is in such a state. A young person of 25 years old should be able to see these things, should be able to look deeply. Why have they been ten years in school and not learnt this? What is the point of learning so much mathematics, for what reason? If we don't know what is happening in us, how do we know what is happening with us as far as feelings are concerned? The Buddha taught that when we have a feeling, we should look at that feeling from within and from outside. And if we know our feeling we can also know the feelings of another, when our elder brother has a difficult feeling we know it. If we don't know it then we could say something that could make him even more unhappy. If we don't know ourselves, we won't know another person's feelings. We should observe our feelings from the inside and from the outside. If we can see our feelings within us, then we will see the feelings in others and we will be careful and will stop ourselves from saying and doing things, which will make the other person, suffer even more. Therefore, to go to school and University for ten years in the world can teach us nothing. Our capacity to see ourselves is very elementary and when we cannot see ourselves, how can we see those around us?

When we have mindfulness concerning ourselves, concerning our feelings, we will have a capacity to put ourselves in the place of the other, which is called "empathy" by psychologists. Chinese people translate it as, *"entering into the other*." It means we see the presence of the other and we can enter into the other in order to be able to feel what the other feels. That is what is meant by "looking deeply" - we can put ourselves into the flesh and bones of the other, into the mind of the other; we can see how that person is feeling. If there is suffering and sadness, we go into that person and we can feel their pain, and if we can feel the feelings of the other we can understand the other and we will not do or say anything which could make that person suffer more. But if we can't do that for ourselves, if we cannot see our own mental formations, how can we see the mental formations of a younger brother or sister, or an elder brother or sister? Therefore, self-awareness leads to empathy. So the first thing is self-awareness, and the second thing is an empathic awareness of others and this is what we should be able to do. Only when we can do this, when we can see the other, enter the other - only then can we have real loving-kindness and compassion. That is one of the aims of education, therefore we have to practice correctly and solidly and then bring these things out and hand them on to our society. We should apply these things in the field of education so that the world can have much less suffering. If we cannot understand ourselves, we cannot understand others; if we cannot love ourselves, we cannot love others. Therefore self-awareness leads to an empathic awareness of others and there is a capacity to enter others and feel their feelings, and then we can look at them with the eyes of understanding and love and only then we help them suffer less.

These things are taught by the Buddha in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness - the mindfulness of the body in the body, mindfulness of the body from within and from outside. We are mindful here and we are mindful there, and when the six sense organs touch sense objects we should always use careful attention. And as we look we should see the Dharmakaya. The Dharmakaya is the wonderful reality of all that is. The Dharmakaya is the world of no birth and no death and if we do not have a deep insight, we are not able to be in touch with the Dharmakaya. Every step enters the

Pure Land, every look sees the Dharmakaya - this is the "*dwelling happily in the present moment*" practice. We can see the Dharmakaya - the wonderful world of no birth and no death. The Dharmakaya is not some vague idea or wish for the future, but something we can do right now, something we can do by means of our mindful steps, our mindful looking. *Every step has to be in touch with the Pure Land and every look has to be in touch with the no birth, no death nature of the Dharmakaya.* That is what the hearer does and that is something we can do now - it is not a wish for the future.

Whenever our sense organs touch sense objects we should always use careful attention to guard the senses so that habit energies can be transformed, our hearts garden of awakening will bloom with one hundred flowers. Each one of us has habit energies and not one of us can say they are without habit energies. This comes from our ancestors and when we live together we accept each other's habit energies. We do not say, *"you have to get rid of your habit energies and then you can stay with us*". I want to be accepted with my habit energies and I vow that I will practice with my habit energies, so we transform ourselves and we transform our ancestors and our descendants. If we don't practice, we shall hand on our habit energies. Our hearts garden of awakening blooms with one hundred flowers - our hearts garden - that is the ocean of our consciousness - we guard it and we transform it and therefore the flowers open. *May we bring the feeling of peace and joy to every house, may we plant wholesome seeds on ten thousand paths.* So we bring peace and joy to many houses, and in our daily life, at every moment we are able to sow wholesome seeds. A smile, a look, a word, they all can sow wholesome seeds. *May we never leave the Sangha body.* The Sangha body is the Pure Land. This is the Pure Land teaching - the Pure Land lies in our heart.

May mountains and rivers be our witness as we bow our heads and request the Lord of Compassion to encompass us all. So our teacher, the Buddha, has saved and rescued beings in our world and we are the continuation, so if I have to be born again, I will be a disciple of the Buddha and continue the work of rescuing beings. So this world is the enlightenment place of our Teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni, and we will stay in this enlightenment place in order to continue the work of our Teacher. This is a vow we make - may mountains and rivers be our witness as we request the Lord of Compassion to encompass us all. Not to leave us outside of his embrace, the embrace of his practice of transformation. Whenever we read this chant, we water the seeds of our ideal, of our happiness, of our direction. If we have mindfulness while reciting this, we will have a lot of happiness as a result.

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